



October 30, 2025

Dear Commission Streamlining Task Force,

I am writing to strongly recommend that San Francisco keep the Commission of Animal Control and Welfare.

This Commission is the only city body whose sole purpose is to defend the well-being of animals. It fills a role that no department can fill. City departments are bound to carry out existing policy. The Commission is where those policies are challenged, improved and humanized. It is where compassion is allowed to speak.

For decades, San Franciscans have turned to the Commission when animals were suffering. Members of the Board of Supervisors and city departments refer people here for a reason — because the Commission listens. So many of its agenda items, and ultimately its recommendations, have come directly from residents who saw harm and refused to look away.

In Defense of Animals has worked directly with the Commission again and again to raise urgent issues, provide expert testimony and move humane solutions forward. When our organization investigates cruelty, neglect or systemic failures in San Francisco, the Commission is often the first and only city forum that will hear those concerns in public, put them on the record and act on them. *Without that partnership, our ability — and the public's ability — to protect animals is severely weakened.*

The result of this collaboration has been profound, lifesaving change.

Without the Commission, the deaths of elephants at the San Francisco Zoo might have passed as quiet tragedies. Instead, through public testimony and relentless pressure — including In Defense of Animals' long campaign to free the zoo's elephants — the Commission insisted that these emotionally complex beings deserved more than confinement and decline. It elevated the call for compassionate release to sanctuary and held the zoo to account. That pressure cracked open a door that had been nailed shut for too long. It gave those elephants dignity in death and gave future elephants a chance at life.



Lulu was freed from San Francisco Zoo and enjoyed almost 20 years at PAWS sanctuary thanks to work by the San Francisco Animal Commission.

Without the Commission, San Francisco might never have embraced the language of “guardian.” Guardian language is not cosmetic. It reflects who we are as a city. It recognizes that animals are family members in our care — not property to be bought, traded or discarded. The Commission advanced this language, which In Defense of Animals has championed for decades, and it now lives in San Francisco law. This is culture change made visible.

Without the Commission, San Francisco might not have had the courage to become the first major U.S. city to ban the sale of new fur. In Defense of Animals stood with the Commission in calling out the violence behind fur and demanding that cruelty not be sold on our streets. That local stand helped build the foundation for California’s statewide fur sales ban. What began in a Commission meeting room now protects foxes, minks, rabbits and so many others across the entire state.

These are not symbolic victories. They are real protections with real consequences for real lives.

The Commission has also pushed, in alignment with In Defense of Animals, to end mutilating declaw procedures on cats, to stop the commercial sale of dogs and cats from breeding mills, and to force accountability when an animal — any animal — is neglected, exploited or killed in this city. The commissioners do this work without pay. They do it with patience, urgency and moral clarity.

Here is what happens without this Commission: residents make heartbreaking

reports about suffering, and those reports vanish into a maze. People are bounced between departments. No one will take ownership. There is no transparent forum, no public record, no follow up. Animals keep suffering without end. *The people trying to defend them are left furious and helpless.*

Right now, the link between animal well-being, public health and environmental responsibility is undeniable. When animals are treated as disposable, public trust erodes. When cruelty is normalized, violence spreads. When we ignore the suffering of beings in our custody, we fail ourselves.

San Francisco calls itself a compassionate city. The Commission of Animal Control and Welfare is proof of that compassion in action — and In Defense of Animals can say from direct experience that this Commission is not theoretical. It is vital. We work with it. The public needs it. Animals depend on it.

Silencing that voice now would not be efficiency. It would be abandonment.

On behalf of In Defense of Animals, I urge you: please recommend that San Francisco keep the Commission of Animal Control and Welfare.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marilyn Kroplick, MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the letters "MD" written in a smaller, more distinct script at the end.

Dr. Marilyn Kroplick
President and CEO
In Defense of Animals

In Defense of Animals is an international animal protection organization based in San Rafael with over 250,000 supporters and a 42-year history of defending animals, people and the environment through education and campaigns, as well as hands-on rescue facilities in California, India, South Korea and rural Mississippi. www.idausa.org